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# Co-sleeping: engaging with the commodified dozing body in Kawabata, Yoshimoto, and Yamazaki

**Abstract:** This paper examines the shifting concept of the body in contemporary Japan through the phenomenon of “co-sleeping” (*soine*) services. It takes as examples Kawabata Yasunari’s 1961 novel *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (*HSB*), Yoshimoto Banana’s 1989 novel *Asleep*, and Yamazaki Sayaka’s 2008–2010 manga *Shimashima*. In *HSB*, the male protagonist sleeps together with girls who are unconscious, knocked out by sleeping pills, and touches them. He can only realize contact with sleeping girls without face-to-face encounters, posing the reader questions such as to what extent one can share one’s corporeality with another in sleeping, what kind of intimacy, desire, and love is involved in payable co-sleeping services, and what it means to engage with the sleeping otherness. Simon Williams and Eyal Ben-Ari have examined co-sleeping as a form of intimate communication. Yet, co-sleeping is a commercial service in *HSB*, *Asleep*, and in *Shimashima*, where the customer pays for sharing bodily warmth and touching another’s (almost unreachable) existence. Having witnessed the recent emergence of actual co-sleeping services in Tokyo and New York, this paper aims to advance literary research on the topic of co-sleeping services and explore the emerging concept of the commercialized sleeping body in contemporary Japanese society.

**Keywords:** co-sleeping, intimacy, love, touch, absence of consciousness, alterity

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## 1 Introduction: from the text body to the body text

I think all these people, all they want is to have someone there, lying next to them. (Yoshimoto 2000: 124–125).

In Yoshimoto Banana’s short story *Asleep*, originally published as *Shirakawa Yofune* in 1989, the female protagonist Terako narrates her memory about her best friend, Shiori, who worked in “a peculiar form of prostitution.” Terako describes

Shiori's job as follows: "All she had to do was lie beside her customers in bed" (Yoshimoto 2000: 122), beside people who are so deeply hurt and exhausted that they inevitably wake up in the middle of the night.

Discussing co-sleeping practices (sleeping next to somebody else, sleeping together), sociologist Simon Williams (2005: 91) writes, "'Separation' and 'autonomy' [...] may be legitimate (Western) concerns, but the emotional warmth and comfort that co-sleeping brings is considered important in family life, particularly where young children are concerned." Anthropologist Eyal Ben-Ari (1997: 38), in his research on *soine* ('co-sleeping') in Japanese childcare, holds that "co-sleeping contributes to the fostering of dependence by reducing children's anxieties and anticipating their needs and desires," thus creating "a sense of secure intimacy." Anthropologist Takie Lebra (1976) writes about sleeping arrangements (such as preference to sleeping together rather than sleeping individually) and co-sleeping (including sharing a bedroom or a futon mat with family members) as one remarkable aspect of physical contact in Japan: "The body warmth experienced in co-sleeping is likely to be retained in the child's memory and recalled with pleasure after he attains maturity" (Lebra 1976: 141). More recent research on co-sleeping includes Diana Adis Tahhan's (2008) study on embodied experience and tactile communication in co-sleeping rituals in a Japanese daycare center. These accounts suggest the importance of physical intimacy shared through co-sleeping in the human developmental process.

Yet, co-sleeping is not only a way to give children a sense of security. It is also a payable service, in which a co-sleeping body comforts and heals a customer's loneliness, suffering, or exhaustion through its physical presence and warmth. Examples to be examined below include Yoshimoto's just quoted *Asleep*, Kawabata Yasunari's story *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (originally published as *Nemureru bijo* in 1961), and Yamazaki Sayaka's manga *Shimashima*, which was serialized in *Mōningu* (a comic weekly published by Kodansha) from 2008 to 2010. *Shimashima* was also made into a TV drama, aired by TBS (Tokyo Broadcasting System Television) in 2011.

Despite extensive interest in dream, literary research into sleep has been rather overlooked. This is mostly due to the un-representable nature of sleep when one dozes off, meaning when one does not have full access to one's own as well as another's consciousness and body. Yet, as one may experience on an everyday basis, almost one-third of human activity resides in sleep. Recent social phenomena have presented various aspects to reconsider the act of sleeping: ideas of sleep management in contemporary society (Williams et al. 2012: 1), promotion of workplace naps in Western countries (Williams et al. 2012: 3–4), continued tolerance to public sleep, called *inemuri* in Japan (Steger 2003), and co-sleeping businesses that have of late emerged in the Tokyo area (*Asahi Shinbun*

2013). Moreover, recent medical developments pose an urgent necessity to reconsider modes of communication with absent existence (absence of awakened consciousness) in sleeping, coma, or in the case of brain death.

In this context, my paper investigates the ways in which intimacy, physicality, and love, if any, with other bodies are communicated in the co-sleeping services. While many representations of co-sleeping within families can be found, e.g., in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *The Makioka Sisters* (Tanizaki 1957 [1948]), where family members co-sleep with the insomniac girl Etsuko, representations of co-sleeping services are rare. Based on work in progress, the paper examines the three works by Kawabata, Yoshimoto, and Yamazaki as special examples dealing with the phenomenon of co-sleeping services in Japan.

In order to explore the nature of commercial co-sleeping, the relationship between intimacy and sleep, and the possibility of love therein, I use the sociological and anthropological analyses on sleep and nightwork by Simon Williams and Anne Allison, respectively, as well as the philosophical/psychological investigations of love by Leo Bersani. On the basis of extensive research, Williams and Allison provide useful accounts for us to ponder upon co-sleeping services. Bersani's psychoanalytic view on love (mainly narcissistic reciprocal love) not only fits in well with the topic of intimacy and love in Kawabata,<sup>1</sup> but also can further develop the analysis of two-person relationships (such as between the analyst–analysand, customer–host/hostess, and the lover–loved).

My paper aims to examine the underexplored phenomenon of co-sleeping services in postwar and contemporary Japan in direct comparison to the topic of co-sleeping in cultural representations. It asks how one can relate to the dozing body, how the sense of intimacy, desire, and love is incorporated, and how one may touch upon another person's absent/present existence. In doing so, this paper tries to rethink the shifting concept of the body in the realm of Japanese studies, as well as literary and cultural studies.

## 2 Capitalizing on co-sleeping services

Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (HSB), Yoshimoto's *Asleep*, and Yamazaki's *Shimashima* depict the co-sleeping (*soine*) business in different ways.

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<sup>1</sup> With regard to an extensive investigation on the cross-cultural application of psychoanalytic/critical theories, please see my D.Phil. thesis, "The touchable and the untouchable: an investigation of touch in modern Japanese literature," completed at the University of Oxford in 2014.

In *HSB*, the male protagonist Old Eguchi visits a secret house, where customers can spend a night with young girls put into sleep through sleeping pills. Although he feels promiscuous about the fact that the woman at this inn assigns him a different girl each time he visits, the woman says that the girls do not remember what has happened during the night and do not recognize the customers. At the end of the story, the sleeping girl next to him accidentally dies, but people at the inn carry her body away, as if nothing had happened.

In *Asleep*, protagonist Terako narrates her memory about Shiori, Terako's relationship to her lover, whose wife remains in a coma at the hospital, and her imaginary encounter with the spirit of his wife. Although the function of co-sleeping does not come to the forefront as in *HSB* and *Shimashima*, this fiction is also a rare example that incorporates the idea of co-sleeping services (for both male and female customers), while depicting an ambiguous boundary between the conscious and the unconscious in dozing.

In the manga *Shimashima*, female protagonist Shio runs a co-sleeping business that dispatches young male employees in their early twenties to sleep next to female customers. Based on her own experience to regain a comfortable sleep, freed from the solitude and trauma caused by her ex-husband, and in the presence of another body (in this case the body of Gai, who is a younger brother of her ex-husband), she has set up the company *sutoraipu shīpu* ('stripe sheep'). It offers women who suffer from insomnia and other sleeping disorders human warmth and a sense of security by arranging physical encounters with young men, who will just lie next to or talk to them all night long, without any sexual activity involved. Shio named her business "stripe sheep" to indicate that co-sleepers have "parallel relationships to customers that never intersect, though they lie next to them" (*tonari ni yorisoi wa suru monono kesshite majiwaranai heikō no kankei*; Yamazaki 2008b: 132).

The emergence of co-sleeping businesses in Japan has recently caused problems. In 2013, the police searched co-sleeping facilities and massage shops due to concerns that business owners broke labor laws by allowing high-school girls under 18 to perform inappropriate services like massaging customers or sleeping with them in private rooms. Business owners were reported to charge up to 1,000 Yen for 10 seconds of services like hugging or providing an "arm pillow" (*udemakura*) (Shimizu 2013). Referred to as *soine-ya* ('co-sleeping houses'), these and similar businesses are now spreading from Tokyo's Akihabara, Shinjuku, and Ikebukuro areas.<sup>2</sup> A similar service called "The Snuggery" was reported in

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance: <http://soineya.net>, <http://hime-siesta.com/about-himesiesta>, and <http://rose-group.wix.com/rosesheep> (accessed 9 September 2014).

New York in 2012 (Owoseje 2012). The purpose of these contemporary services is to offer customers, who are mostly total strangers, a chance to hug someone, snuggle against someone, and sleep with someone, allowing them to feel the warmth of the human body without sex. Likewise, Shiori in *Asleep*, asked by Terako about the possibility of having sex, responds: “Of course not! People who want that stuff go other places” (Yoshimoto 2000: 123). The common feature of co-sleeping services is to provide a sense of security and comfort while refusing sexual activity.

One significant difference between these services is that the sleeping girls in *HSB* are actually sleeping from the beginning to the end, put asleep by sleeping pills, while those in *Asleep* and *Shimashima*, as well as in real business life, retain a certain control and decide for themselves when they want to be awake or doze off. The woman in the inn in *HSB* tells Eguchi: “She’ll sleep on and on and know nothing at all, from start to finish. Not even who’s been with her” (Kawabata 1969: 14). In contrast to Yoshimoto and Yamazaki, Kawabata’s novel doesn’t include any communication between the customers and the awakened co-sleepers. Instead, the sleeping girls remain unreachable in the sense that they do not possess an awakened consciousness and, therefore, a memory to refer back to, even if the customers engage with their bodies.

In his interpretation of *HSB*, Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) adds another layer of mediated communication between the girls and Eguchi: Kawabata succeeds in variously depicting six sleeping girls, who strictly do not speak, without letting the protagonist’s intention be absorbed by the girls (Mishima 1967: 242–243), and thus without destroying their beauty. Eguchi cherishes the loved object insofar as it appears safe for him, because it does not menace his own life. He narrates:

She was not a living doll, for there could be no living doll; but, so as not to shame an old man no longer a man, she had been made into a living toy. No, not a toy: for the old men, she could be life itself. Such life was, perhaps, life to be touched with confidence. (Kawabata 1969: 20)<sup>3</sup>

In this way, communication between Eguchi and the girl is doubly mediated or distanced away from two-way communication: firstly by the lack of the girl’s consciousness, and secondly by Eguchi’s withdrawal from too much interaction that could harm either her or him.

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**3** The Japanese original (Kawabata 1967: 19) reads “*anshin shite furerareru inochi*,” which could also be translated as “life to be touched with comfort/security.”

The sleeping girl is depicted as a life that can be touched without fear and anxiety. Eguchi knows he is safe, because the girl is sleeping without realizing what he has done to her body. This is the security obtained due to the absence of the other: specifically, the absence of the other's awakened consciousness. Literary scholar Susan Napier (1996: 63) states: "They [the girls] are objects in the most fundamental sense, gazed at by men who cannot engage with them in any active way." This absence of consciousness certainly raises the ethical question of whether their subjectivity is considered in this relationship. Eguchi's contact is possible in this case due to the lack of the sleeper's otherness. Since there is no two-way communication that can be remembered by the girls, Eguchi says: "I see. It's not a human relationship" (Kawabata 1969: 38). The pursuit of physical intimacy seemingly requires human warmth, moisture, and weight, but the intimacy pursued through Kawabata's example illuminates a different type of intimacy in sleep: one that is not communicable, interactive, and sharable, does not involve the co-sleeper's otherness, and does not even take place on a co-sleeper's conscious level. In *HSB*, the fact that his actions toward the girls are physically perceived but not consciously remembered is almost a precondition for Eguchi to feel comfortable in contact with their sleeping bodies.

The following section will focus on Yamazaki's *Shimashima* and Kawabata's *HSB* to examine intimacy and desire exchanged during sleep, as well as gender issues within the relationship between the conscious (looking) male and the unconscious (looked at) female.

### 3 Intimacy and desire in the co-sleeping business

The female customers in Yamazaki's *Shimashima* who use the co-sleeping service for the first time doubt whether it really doesn't involve any sexual act. One of them, a journalist, tries to disclose the business as *fūzoku* ('involving sexual entertainment,' Yamazaki 2010a: 120-131). Another woman hesitates because she doubts that the co-sleeping service really comes without sex (Yamazaki 2008a: 20-21). Anthropologist Anne Allison has analyzed various types and aspects in the field of the entertainment business (*mizu shōbai*, literally 'water business'), a core element of "the nightlife of urban Japan" (Allison 1994: 7). Mainly consumed by male businessmen, *mizu shōbai* makes a clear distinction between "a woman obtained with money" as a social peripheral on the one hand, and a wife obtained through marriage on the other. Allison (1994: 130, emphasis added) comments on a female interviewee: "This [middle-aged] woman could understand why her husband would find such a woman [in a nightclub] desirable, but she would

not admit to feeling threatened by the other woman's desirability. Her attitude was that such a woman had a place where her husband might visit but where he would *never stay*."

Allison investigates nightlife services for male customers that are primarily based on a certain physical distance to construct female hostesses as fetishes. This "recreative, nonprocreative male sexuality" of the "voyeurs, fetishists, and consumers" (Allison 1996: 46) is opposed to the family-oriented, procreative sexuality. Obviously, the gender roles of the normative *mizu shōbai* setting are reversed in *Shimashima*. As male co-sleepers are dispatched to the female customers' apartments, the "never stay" settings of *mizu shōbai* such as clubs or bars are not available. The distance between the co-sleepers is maintained in a different way: In order to avoid any excessive personal attachment, it is strictly forbidden for customers in *Shimashima* to repetitively appoint their favorite co-sleepers. While the action mostly takes place in the customers' apartments, co-sleepers hardly ever come back. So in a way, they also "never stay." But unlike visually based types of *mizu shōbai* club settings, where "customers could watch but not talk to or touch" female fetishes (Allison 1996: 46), the co-sleeping space in *Shimashima* involves shared breath, heartbeat, and warmth of the body in physical proximity overnight. By lying next to each other, touching, and creating a soothing relationship, co-sleeping in *Shimashima* develops a very fragile, sensitive, and calm intimacy, rather than physical pleasure and sexual satisfaction. But it is just as short-lived as consumable *mizu shōbai*.

Allison's following point is also useful to think about the sociocultural background of Kawabata's *HSB*. Allison (1996: 45) refers to film director Ōshima Nagisa, who observed that "sex has become increasingly commodified in the posteconomic boom of late 1960s Japan." She interprets his implication that sexual commodification "has intensified since the late 1960s with more people (particularly men) working at jobs that demand longer hours and more totalizing commitments than before and at workplaces that are farther from their homes" (Allison 1996: 181). Postwar Japan experienced a radical shift in family formation such as the dissolution of the *ie* system,<sup>4</sup> (attempts for) the social inclusion of women, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (*danjo koyō kikai kintō hō*),

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<sup>4</sup> In the *ie* system, one child remains in the parental house and eventually leads the family, ensuring its continuity (Ochiai 1997: 58–59, 62). Margaret Hillenbrand (2007: 181) writes about *ie* as "the physical manifestation of a continuous bloodline that stretched backwards to the family forebears and forwards into the realm of the unborn." The collapse of the *ie* system may have played a role in the extent to which the individual body is bound or unbound to the family in the postwar period. Kawabata's *The Dancing Girl (Maihime)* in 1951 touches upon this issue.



effective from 1986, and a rapid economic growth keeping middle-aged men away from home for most of the day.

The liberation of body and sexuality was mirrored and resonated in the *nikutai bungaku* ('literature of the flesh') soon after World War II, represented by authors like Tamura Taijirō (1911–1983) and Sakaguchi Ango (1906–1955). Their wartime experiences at the front effected a more tangible and concrete representation of the body, nurturing disbelief in the ideology and faith in bare flesh. Unlike the proletarian literature, which had employed ideological lens to depict the laboring body, the literature of the flesh attempted to depict an individual body without ideology. Literary scholar Douglas Slaymaker (2004: 8–12) describes the focus of the literature of the flesh as the individual flesh (*nikutai*) discussed in the tension between the material body (*karada*), the philosophical or "spiritual" body (*shintai*), and most importantly, the body as a nation (*kokutai*), even to the point where this strong faith in the body itself becomes ideological. Although it focuses on the exploration of the existential meaning of the body, the liberation of sex, and the individual physicality, *nikutai bungaku* is mostly based on the viewpoints and experiences of young or middle-aged men, as in Tamura's 1947 novel *Nikutai no mon* ('Gate of Flesh'). After the emergence of a few postwar literary groups in the late 1940s and a following literary group called *Daisan no shinjin* ('The Third Newcomers') appeared in the mid-1950s, the new generation including Ishihara Shintarō (1932–) and Ōe Kenzaburō (1935–) combined topics of the body and sexuality with political discussions and demands.

Kawabata, who had been present in literary circles since the 1920s, dedicated the early stage of his career to experimental writing. He resumed this path toward the end of his career in the 1960s. Literary scholar Roy Starrs (1998: 192) states that Kawabata, in *One Arm* (originally published as *Kataude* in 1964) and *HSB*, is "returning with a vengeance to the modernist experiments of his youth." But unlike the postwar works just mentioned, which focus on the revelation of the male body via the female body, the male protagonist in *HSB* is an old man who no longer possesses sexual energy. Customers go to the inn not to find sexual satisfaction like in the prostitution business, but to feel alive. Old Kiga, introducing the facility to Eguchi, says he went to this house "when the despair of old age was too much for him" (Kawabata 1969: 22). In this sense, it is difficult to categorize *HSB* as a novel about prostitution or the conventional sex industry. Even though public interest in sleep and sleeping disorders were not yet as explicit as in present-day society, *HSB* functions like a predecessor of Yoshimoto's *Asleep* and Yamazaki's *Shimashima*, signaling out human needs and desires for intimate communication through co-sleeping and describing it as a commercial enterprise.

Nevertheless, co-sleeping for adults being a payable service, a business where money is exchanged in order to satisfy the customers' expectations, its intimate, secure, soothing relationship cannot be completely separated from sexual desire. Even in *HSB*, Eguchi's scopophilic desires and his sexualized gaze on the sleeping girls suggest a sort of prostitution (with various set prohibitions). Kawabata shows that scopophilic/voyeuristic, corporeal, and maternal/parental desires and intimacies are all convoluted in Eguchi's special relationship with the sleeping girls. Given that the "nightwork" Allison examined emphasizes the distance maintained between the male (looker) and the female (looked-at) in the visual communication, the physical contact in *HSB* in the form of a "touch" provides a useful scope to analyze indistinguishable types of intimacies in co-sleeping service, as examined below.

## 4 Memories of physical contact in co-sleeping

At the end of *Shimashima*, protagonist Shio overcomes her insomnia and her fear of being deserted, which stems from the traumatizing experience of being left by her then-husband. Co-sleeping beside her ex-husband's younger brother, Shio enjoys a pleasant, peaceful dream and retains a soothing memory to refer back to whenever she might suffer again (Yamazaki 2009: 18–19, 2010b: 199–200). This memory of physical contact through co-sleeping gives her a sense of security, warmth, and comfort.

In *HSB*, too, the memory through physical contact goes beyond love and sexual relationship – but it is not necessarily a pleasant one. For Kawabata's story, physical contacts are not limited to sexual actions. They are much more significant, reminding us of our maternal/parental relationship and opening up a wider circuit of memory. This section examines intimate memories communicated through a form of touch during sleep. Especially in *HSB*, the memories circulate among different figures, complicating the concepts of love, intimacy, and human relationship through their engagement with the dozing bodies.

While Eguchi gazes at the sleeping girl, the narrator in *HSB* says:

He had forgotten the nightmare, and as affection for the girl poured through him, there came over him too a childlike feeling that he was loved by the girl. He felt for a breast, and held it softly in his hand. There was in the touch a strange flicker of something, as if this were the breast of Eguchi's own mother before she had him inside her. He withdrew his hand, but the sensation went from his chest to his shoulders. (Kawabata 1969: 36)

In this case, the current touch with the girl is connected to Eguchi's own childhood memory or imaginary recollection – not that of an objectified but of a personalized child, as himself. This embodied (or imaginary) childhood memory is not one of anxiety, but of fullness and richness. Kawabata also describes one of Eguchi's bitter experiences regarding touch. He remembers being criticized by his former lover for bringing with him the smell of milk, as a result of embracing his baby daughter shortly before:

"Milk. It smells of milk. It smells like a baby." Starting to fold the coat he had taken off, the woman glared at him, her face tense. "Your baby. You took it in your arms when you left home, didn't you? Didn't you? I hate it! I hate it!"

Her hands trembling violently, the woman stood up and threw his coat to the floor. "I hate it. Coming here just after you've had a baby in your arms." Her voice was harsh, but the look in her eyes was worse. She was a geisha with whom he had for some time been familiar. She had known all along that he had a wife and children, but the smell of the nursing child brought violent revulsion and jealousy. Eguchi and the geisha were not again on good terms. (Kawabata 1969: 24)

Here, the smell of milk on his arms is something to be hated, not by Eguchi himself, but by his lover, who is not part of the family. Although there is no description of how Eguchi's touching his youngest daughter is received in his family context, it is an unwelcome touch for his lover, since it excludes her from the family circle. This may again verify Allison's observation that recreative/non-procreative sexuality is differentiated from procreative, family-oriented sexuality, as discussed earlier.

Another detachment from children appears in the form of a dream. Eguchi takes a sleeping pill and falls asleep while playing with the girl's long hair, as though combing it. She turns away from him. In his dream, one of his daughters gives birth to a substantially deformed child in a hospital. The baby is soon hidden from the mother behind the curtain, who comes up and starts mincing it to throw it away, as he and a doctor just stand aside (Kawabata 1969: 32). Waking up, Eguchi ponders about a possible relationship between the things he saw in his dream and his real-life behavior: "Was it that, having come in search of misshapen pleasure, he had had a misshapen dream?" (Kawabata 1969: 32). Although he didn't have any misshapen children or grandchildren in reality, a baby in his dream appears with deformations – almost as if the baby took the form of a blame on him, a blame for his deformed desires pursued at this facility.

In their descriptions of the co-sleeping service, Yamazaki and Kawabata commonly feature mechanisms which prevent sleepers from having a degree of attachment that might reach the level of love. In other words, it allows intimate

communication only below the threshold of a love relationship (Yamazaki 2008b: 126–127). The intimate relationship between customers and co-sleepers is carefully kept within the domain of recreative sexuality, to use Allison's (1994) terminology here, and excluding any possibility of procreative forms of sex. However, one could also argue that the distinction between the contacts in the entertainment or prostitution business and those in the family context becomes blurred. In the napping culture of Japan, the *inemuri* (one kind of nap that is not separated from the waking world) already allows everybody to briefly sneak out of their waking activities during lectures or meetings, at a party or in a train every day (Steger and Brunt 2003: 18). Proper sleeping (over hours) is a mode of rest where one reveals one's dozing identity, to which even oneself does not have full access. Moreover, sleeping is primarily a private activity where one may share breath, bodily warmth, and moisture; becoming as intimate as sex, if with a partner. Given these accounts of sleeping, Allison's division between recreative and procreative sexuality is challenged by the contemporary co-sleeping business. Against the backdrop of this indistinguishable nature of intimacy in sleeping, I apply Bersani's analysis of love to Kawabata's *HSB* in order to dissect the precarious relationship between intimacy and love, and examine any possibility of love in the co-sleeping services.

## 5 The possibility of love in co-sleeping services

In the collective work *Intimacies* by literary scholar Leo Bersani and practicing psychoanalyst Adam Phillips, Bersani (2008a: 1) states that “[p]sychoanalysis is about what two people can say to each other if they agree not to have sex.” While the constant presence of a “no-sex contract” (Bersani 2008a: 3) in any psychoanalytic setting also applies to the setting of co-sleeping services, another contract suggested by French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu merits further discussion here, namely the prohibition of touching. Anzieu considers the skin as our primary means of communication. The skin is the psychic and physical boundary between individuals. It acts as an interface to keep the outside out and to protect the body against infection or penetration. It is an “inscribing surface” that retains and accumulates goodness through feeding and care (Anzieu 1989: 40). The skin is a host of previous sensations and emotions, which have an effect on the formation of our subjectivity. On the basis of this understanding of the skin, Anzieu produces a theory of the identity created through the senses of the skin, namely the “skin ego” (*le moi-peau*). On the other hand, Anzieu also admits the prohibition of touching, his analysis starting with Freudian hypnotherapy

and Jean-Martin Charcot's treatment of hysteria, and Anzieu (1989: 141) observes: "The prohibition on undressing, on showing one's naked body, touching the psychoanalyst's body or being touched by his hand or any other part of his body is maintained: It is the minimum requirement of psychoanalysis."

Anzieu's prohibition of touching goes hand in hand with Allison's observation of nightwork, in which the relationships between customers and hostesses are based on distanced vision, keeping the touch aside. Anzieu (1989: 141) allows the patient to touch the analyst "emotionally," but not physically. Apparently, skin contact might cross the thin line between the communication of intimate energy and love. Likewise, various businesses in contemporary Japan running under the name of *mizu shōbai*, especially those targeting scopophilic desires, exclude sexual contact. Of course, prohibitions of physical encounter can inversely stimulate the customers' desire for it. The prohibition in the psychoanalytic setting can be analyzed in conjunction with the co-sleeping service: How is the borderline maintained between intimacy and love?

In the case of *HSB*, the prohibiting mechanism lies not only in the no-sex contract or in Eguchi's feeling of guilt as customer of an unethical business. His own attachment to the loved object and his desire to keep it intact also function as a mechanism limiting his range of action. In other words, the prohibition of love (too much attachment to the level of love) in *HSB* is not only an external constraint imposed by the woman running the facility (as are the no-sex and no-multiple-appointment contracts in *Shimashima*), but it is also an internal constraint that Eguchi (or Kawabata) inevitably and unconsciously poses on himself, throwing up the issue of object relations and narcissism as the other side of the same coin.

"Every theory of love is, necessarily, a theory of object relations," writes Bersani (2008b: 72). "Love is transitive; to conceptualize it is to address not only the question of how we choose objects to love, but also, more fundamentally, the very possibility of a subject loving an object." Discussing object relations and narcissism, Bersani (2008b: 73) asks how "we should or even can love others 'for themselves.'" In his analysis of love, he explores the reconciliation of narcissism and love connected to the world in the name of "impersonal narcissism," where "[n]arcissistic love in both the lover and the beloved (can they even still be distinguished?) is exactly identical to a perfect knowledge of otherness" (Bersani 2008b: 85). Kawabata's love, too, can be read as a matter of narcissism. Modernist writer Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (1972: 286–287) argues that the protagonist in Kawabata has a preference for women, onto whom it is possible for him to project himself. He needs the girl insofar as she heightens his own narcissism, or insofar as the other's ego does not merge into his own, as pointed out by Mishima (1967: 243). This allows him to maintain a certain level of safety for himself.

Through the lens of Bersani's framework, this narcissistic love could be love for the other at the same time. However, there is a rupture of communication in *HSB*: the absence of the other's awakened consciousness. Eguchi says:

Giving everything over to him, aware of nothing, in a sleep as of suspended animation, she breathed gently, her innocent face on its side. Certain old men would perhaps caress every part of her body, others would be racked with sobs. The girl would not know, in either case. (Kawabata 1969: 23)

The pursuit of intimacy and the elevated attachment to the sleeping girl in this case are possible due to the girl's lack of consciousness. In this sense, the customer co-sleeping with the girl necessarily commits ethical violence. Nevertheless, the sleeping girl's lack of awakened consciousness and volition, which might otherwise lead her to actively reject the visitor, does not drive Eguchi into a "do-whatever-you-want" situation. He rather cares for the "object" of his intimacy, trying to keep it intact: "In taking his hand from her neck, he was as cautious as if he were handling a breakable object" (Kawabata 1969: 23). Eguchi avoids affecting her too much with his contact, he fears to disturb her purity with love as too demanding an emotion. As if he knew that loving someone does not always have the same meaning to the beloved.

In *HSB* and *Shimashima*, customers of co-sleeping are not allowed to sleep with the same girl more than once. This rule serves as the mechanism preventing too much attachment with emotional potential. In addition, Eguchi fears destroying his loved object in trying to touch the girl. Not only at the inn, but also in himself, there is a mechanism that thwarts his love for the girl. It helps him not to harm the girl, and not to be harmed by her.

Bersani (2008b: 75) writes: "Love is an exemplary concept [...] about the possibility of connectedness between the subject and the world." But in his concept, the narcissistic love in the lover and the loved is not necessarily distinguishable. The self of the lover and the self the beloved sees in the lover are almost inseparable. Bersani (2008b: 85) names this reversal of the relational mode "impersonal narcissism." By undoing the dichotomy between the active and passive, Bersani's approach attests to a reciprocal relationship: "If we were able to relate to others according to this model of impersonal narcissism, what is different about others (their psychological individuality) could be thought of as merely the envelope of the more profound (if less fully realized, or completed) part of themselves, which is our sameness" (Bersani 2008b: 86).

Kawabata's narcissism can be read almost as if it were a safety net. His protagonist is touching the girl insofar as it is a safe touch and it guarantees a silent love for himself, as he puts it, the "life to be touched with confidence." But

considering the reciprocal nature of such love, it is impossible to see it only as a comfortable condition. It also encounters the insecurity, anxiety, and menace that come with the other's body, including the resistance of the sleeping girls. Feeling an attachment to the girl next to whom he has slept, Eguchi asks the woman of the inn if he could stay until she wakes up. The woman answers: "That's exactly the sort of thing we can't allow [...]. It's best just to keep them company and not let foolish emotions get in the way. She doesn't even know she's slept with you. She won't cause you any trouble." Eguchi responds: "But I remember her. What if we were to pass in the street?" (Kawabata 1969: 55). Eguchi comes to question the policy of the inn precisely because he desires a human relationship in which he can feel the girl's physical presence and get her conscious reaction and response at the same time.

In the unconscious, inhuman relationship at the facility, Eguchi is only allowed to carry out various surreal touches on the sleeping girl. He has to treat her almost like a doll or toy and ultimately feels dissatisfaction. Kawabata thus carefully describes Eguchi's subliminal desire for reciprocity, which includes the fantasy of communicating with an awakened consciousness. One night, attracted to the scent of the third girl, Eguchi slides his body toward her:

As though in reply, she turned gently toward him, her arms extended under the blanket as if to embrace him.

"Are you awake?" he asked, pulling away and shaking her jaw. "Are you awake?" He put more strength into his hand. She turned face down as if to avoid it, and as she did so a corner of her mouth opened slightly, and the nail of his index finger brushed against one or two of her teeth. He left it there. Her lips remained parted. She was of course in a deep sleep, and not merely pretending. (Kawabata 1969: 40)

Eguchi, not yet accustomed to sharing time with a girl who does not say a word, opens her eyes. She does not recognize him. "Empty longing had not left him. He wanted to see the eyes of this witchlike girl. He wanted to hear her voice, to talk to her" (Kawabata 1969: 44–45). After some attempts to breach the house rule that one should not try to wake sleeping girls, he decides to stick to the rule, feeling emptiness in himself for not being able to communicate properly with the girl.

Yet in looking at the girl, who seems more alive than the earlier girl, Eguchi narrates, "Life was there, most definitely, in her scent, in her touch, in the way she moved" (Kawabata 1969: 45). This girl, turning her back toward him, seeks for him with her arm. This is what follows:

"Don't," the girl seems to say, in a voice that was not a voice.

“Are you awake?” He pulled more strongly at the knee, to see whether she would awaken. Weakly, it bent toward him. He put his arm under her neck and gently shook her head.

“Ah,” said the girl. “Where am I going?”

“Are you awake? Wake up.”

“Don’t, don’t.” Her face brushed against his shoulder, as if to avoid the shaking. [...]

“What do you think you’re doing?” said the girl. “Stop it.”

“I am not doing a thing.”

But she was talking in her sleep. (Kawabata 1969: 45)

Various thoughts arise in Eguchi’s mind. Can he wake her and keep her awake until the next morning? Might his touch rather than his words make her talk in her sleep? He is excited about the idea that he could have something like a conversation with her.

“Mother.” It was like a low groan. “Wait, wait. Do you have to go? I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

“What are you dreaming of? It’s a dream, a dream.” Old Eguchi took her more tightly in his arms, thinking to end the dream. The sadness in her voice stabbed at him. Her breasts were pressed flat against him. Her arms moved. Was she trying to embrace him, thinking him her mother? (Kawabata 1969: 46)

In contrast to his initial suspicion that she might be a “witch” seducing old men, he comes to think that she is rather bewitched herself: “Her mind had been put into a deep sleep, and her body had awakened as a woman. She had become a woman’s body, without mind” (Kawabata 1969: 46). Because he himself is puzzled how to read her vocal and physical performances, his thoughts roam, and he wonders if “the heavy touch of old men had trained her to talk in her sleep, to resist” (Kawabata 1969: 47). Then he stretches out his hand, wondering what to say and where to touch her to get a feedback. Because the girl is unconscious, Eguchi’s wish for an interaction with the girl grows even stronger and he starts to (at least) imagine. And yet, using Bersani’s concept of reciprocal love that stems from impersonal narcissism, we may say that there *is* in fact an interaction between Eguchi and the girl. By touching the sleeping girls, hesitantly yet occasionally firmly, he tries to reassure himself of his own existence. He even waits to see if his touch has been received: He carefully observes the girl’s responses and even tries to find the spots on her body that let him trigger stronger reactions. Ultimately, he



seeks and confirms his own life by touching the girl's body. He gets excited by the feedback from the girl, despite her condition of sleep or unconsciousness.

Self-love and the love of another person are closely intertwined. Self-recognition and self-awareness stem from the confirmation from others. Kawabata shows that, even in the state of sleep or unconsciousness, this (wish for a) reciprocal relationship to others still survives. Through the external and internal prohibitions of love, Kawabata describes a form of love that is almost unattainable, almost violent, and almost unperceivable. The presence of the other is a condition for the emergence of love: "each partner demands of the other [...] that he reflect the lover's type of being, his universal singularity [...], by recognizing and cultivating that singularity as his own most pervasive, most pressing potentiality" (Bersani 2008b: 86). Furthermore, the tactile love in Kawabata is repeatedly projected onto different figures or girls, and often recalls memories of Eguchi's life. As Susan Napier (1996: 63) argues: "The scent and looks of each new girl he sleeps with evoke different feelings and recollections, some enjoyable but many disturbing." Adding to the reciprocal nature that affection and love emerge from the (absent) presence of the other, the touch is designed to circulate over the division between individuals and time. The ultimate goal of this reciprocal relationship is the connectedness of the one and the other, fostered on the tumult of temporality by the wish to meet again in the future and by a recollection of the past. Bersani (2008b: 72) writes: "Love, which we like to think of as a discovery, is inseparable from memory."

When Eguchi gazes at a red drop oozing from the petals of the red flower that his now-dead mother prepared for his wife, he awakes from his dream to find that the girl sleeping beside him is cold and without a pulse. Memory during co-sleeping circulates, arising from birth and proximating to death, sharing the wandering of consciousness. These shared experiences in co-sleeping open up another dimension of subjectivity.

## 6 Sharing vulnerability in co-sleeping

Eguchi's communication with sleeping girls is limited to the materiality of their sleeping bodies. His action is not perceived by any awakened consciousness, and he does not receive any specified, explicit response. However, human sleep consists of different stages: In the transitional period of drowsiness, in which Eguchi's thoughts flow, one may feel almost awake. Then one goes into the light sleep stage, where the system to maintain wakefulness switches to promote sleep. In the deep sleep stage, the mind becomes unfocused and starts to drift. Finally,

rapid eye movements (REM) indicate the time when the brain is most active and dreaming occurs (Idzikowski 2007: 18–20). During each stage, the sleeper experiences different reactions toward external stimuli, described in Eguchi's state of drowsiness and the dozing girls' responses. Adding to the fact that he is trying to touch the untouchable virgin, as Yoshiyuki and Mishima have put it, Kawabata's protagonist is trying to touch not-fully-reachable girls in their sleep: the presence of the absent mind.

Since there are two units or organisms involved resonating each other's conditions, the line between absence and presence, consciousness and sleep, openness and closure, becomes blurred. Williams (2005: 70, emphasis original) writes: "I cannot *directly* audit my own sleep," as the sleeping body does not often notice his own snore; "Sleep, therefore, involves a certain '*absence*' from both self and others." As has been explored in various disciplines, from traditional psychoanalysis to recent neurophysiology, the sleeping body is, to some extent, an unreachable existence once consciousness dozes off. Freud (1966: 337, emphasis original) writes that sleep is "characterized by *motor paralysis (paralysis of the will)*."

A peculiar element of being asleep lies in the fact that one does not have full access to the dozing self or to the other, that is to say, to the dozing alterity. In such a context, co-sleeping offers the sharing of breaths, heart beats, and touches, on the verge of consciousness. Shiori in Yoshimoto's *Asleep* says: "Because when you're sleeping next to all these exhausted people, it's like you start matching your breath to theirs, slowly, those deep breaths ... maybe you're breathing in the darkness they have inside them. Sometimes I'm thinking to myself *You mustn't go to sleep* even as I'm dozing off, having some terrible dream. All these surreal things" (Yoshimoto 2000: 125). Similarly, in *HSB* the girl's breath, scent, and touch bring Eguchi a series of fantasies and memories, without a word (Kawabata 1969: 48). Upon Gai's arrival to the customer's apartment in *Shimashima*, she leans toward him without consciousness and falls down due to sleeping pills (Yamazaki 2008a: 182). Unlike contemporary co-sleeping services in real society, the motif of co-sleeping in these representations illuminates not only the communication of physical warmth and the sense of security, but the vulnerability of shared-ness: the vulnerability of being with the dozing alterity, which constantly makes shared intimacy uncertain.

Williams (2005: 91) adds: "Whilst sleeping with someone, as already noted, may very well denote a level of intimacy and a shared bodily vulnerability over and above anything remotely sexual, both sleep and sex may be (intensely) pleasurable '*releases*' involving a relinquishing of rational control, a loss of self (containment), and an immersion in the more carnal or sensual aspects of our embodiment." Maurice Blanchot (1982: 266), too, considers sleep that triggers the

emergence of one's consciousness as a condition to fix oneself and the world, or a point where "I establish and reestablish myself." Sleep is not a full rest, but rather its impossibility. As Blanchot continues: "Night, the essence of night, does not let us sleep." Reading the vulnerability denoted through co-sleeping in literature via Blanchot's understanding of sleep implies not only a "shared bodily vulnerability," as Williams suggests, but also the vulnerability one experiences in understanding oneself on the verge of consciousness, precisely because sleep blurs and renews one's own existence.

Being with someone in such a moment, while incessantly recommencing one's own being, does not guarantee any security or responsibility for another's alterity. Eguchi, putting a certain strength into his hands on the young breasts of the sleeping girl and finding no response, remembers his mother's breasts when he was still a child – and falls asleep. When he awakes, he finds the girl's body with no pulse and wonders: "Did I strangle her in my sleep?" (Kawabata 1969: 97). Terako, too, in *Asleep* echoes with what Shiori has said about co-sleeping with customers and narrates as follows:

I think maybe as I'm sleeping next to him [her boyfriend], stretched out here like his shadow, maybe I take in his very being, his heart and mind, just like breathing in the darkness. And maybe if you keep on doing that, if you come to know lots of different people's dreams, like you [Shiori] did, maybe you reach a point from which you can't return, and maybe that weighed down on you so heavily that in the end there was really nothing you could do but die. (Yoshimoto 2000: 149)

Apart from offering comfort and the sense of security, co-sleeping can also draw the partners to the verge of (un)consciousness, where even life is uncertain. Co-sleeping also means sharing this very vulnerability of being, disallowing full access to the dozing alterity, and to the self.

## 7 Conclusion

The motif of co-sleeping in Kawabata, Yamazaki, and Yoshimoto sheds light on the growing demand for co-sleeping services in contemporary society. As literature and manga show, customers seek more in these relationships than some human communication with co-sleepers, more than just attention and care. They also desire warmth, comfort, and intimacy by spending a night in close encounter with another human being, or body. Yet the customers never really reach their co-sleeper's existence. They are externally constrained by the rule not to develop too much attachment to the persons they sleep with, but

also internally constrained by their tendency to subtly distance themselves from their loved objects, in order to keep the objects intact or prevent themselves from stepping into further entanglement in human relationship.

As a result, what brings customers and co-sleepers together is the sharing of an extreme and intimate experience: They do not have full access to each other's bodies or consciousness. While dozing off into the realm of the unconscious, they can at least be absent together, walking along the blurred lines of (un)consciousness and dream in sleep. The touch of the body does not guarantee a response, let alone interaction; it is risky, potentially violent, and may even blur the line between life and death. In this respect, co-sleeping touches upon visceral perceptions, the borderline between intimacy and love, corporeal vulnerability, and the unknowability of the being sleeping next to oneself. It challenges and invites us to delve into precarious (in)human relationships and to realize how difficult it is to embrace, to find, to love, and to even reach the other's body.

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